



Exciting Year Ahead for the WTA

By Tom Schwab, O.J. Noer Turfgrass Research and Education Facility, University of Wisconsin-Madison

The WTA has big plans for a very exciting 2007, with some big changes in-store for 4 events. The year started out with the Winter Turfgrass and Greenscape EXPO, followed by the biannual Homeowner Turfgrass Field Day in the spring, the professional turf manager's Summer Field Day, and the Golf 'Fundraiser for the Fellowship' in the fall.

EXPO 2007 will be over by the time this article appears, but it's not too early to start planning for EXPO 2008. Your UW Turf Team and WTA Board are meeting in January to make plans for next year's show. They're meeting earlier than ever and have added new Soil Science Department professor Dr. Doug Soldat to the committee to help brainstorm for the best turf education possible for 2008. Education is foremost on the committee's agenda but other factors of EXPO will likewise be discussed. One of the discussions will be location. Is it time to move the conference to another venue? In '07, we changed the format of the trade show to be table top displays only. If this is successful, EXPO will not need the large exhibition center that a full blown trade show needs, and it could be moved to other convention centers around the state. Stay tuned and call the Noer Facility if you have opinions to make EXPO the best.

Next on the WTA calendar is the biannual Homeowner Turfgrass Field Day which is conducted in cooperation with the UW Extension. This event is held every other year at the Noer Facility for the general public to learn about caring for their lawns at home. Traditionally this event was held in the late summer to coincide with the professional turf-

grass field day, but we've realized that homeowners are more interested in improving their lawns in the spring. Subjects covered include how to establish a new or rejuvenate an old lawn, and how to choose the best turfgrass. Other subjects include managing problems with turf diseases, insects and weeds, in addition to teaching how to do a soil tests, interpret the results, and fertilize to maximize turf health. Yet more topics include complimenting traditional lawns with prairies or ornamental grasses. Lastly homeowners are encouraged to bring questions and yard samples so our panel of experts can suggest ways to improve their lawn's condition. The date for Homeowner Turfgrass Field Day has not been decided yet but will likely occur in late May.

In summer, the WTA shifts its focus from homeowners to professional turf managers. This year's annual WTA Summer Field Day will combine with Turf Producers International and the Midwest Sod Council to form a mega field day on Thursday, July 26th. The Summer Field Day trade show segment usually takes place on one acre of turf that compliments the research tour segment. The research tour will still be held this year but the trade show will expand to 15 acres of land! The huge trade show is needed to display and demonstrate all the equipment used in sod production around the world. Field Day '07 will be very exciting as it unites all turfgrass industries in one location.

The year will finish with the most fun event, the ever popular Golf 'Fundraiser for the Fellowship' at the Blackwolf Run, Meadow Valleys Course on Thursday, October 11th. This course is so special that nine of

its holes played host to the 1998 U.S. Women's Open. Mike Lee hosted the WTA Fundraiser five years ago on Meadow Valleys and we are appreciative that he has once again invited us back. The Kohler courses are such a pleasure to play and our scores should be that much better having played the course before. This golf outing has sold out for five years in a row, partially because of the terrific host venues and partially because of its fundraising goal of supporting turfgrass research into the future.

These four events make for a busy and exciting year for the WTA. We hope you are able to attend all of them. They will provide great turfgrass management information for an area as small as your backyard to something as large as a world-wide sod production industry and everything in between. Then to finish the year, there's a fun round of golf awaiting you and your friends at Blackwolf Run. ♣

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The Earth Cover

By **Pat Norton**, Golf Course Superintendent, Nettle Creek Country Club

They are giving me a rest now. I can feel the cold penetrating my scalp across the vast area that humans refer to as the Northern Hemisphere. They call this time period **'winter'**...but to me and my natural brethren it is simply a time of rest and partial rejuvenation. Humans aren't as active upon my surface during these cold chunks of time known as 'the winter months'...but it is difficult for all in that the warming radiation is at too great an angle.

As a result, during winter my upper half is always very cold and frozen, while my bottom half is warm, thawed, and full of life. I overhear them explain that the reverse is true during the summer months due to something called 'the Earth's axis' and 'revolving around the Sun.' And so...because some greater force than I decided to spin me upon an angled axis and orbit me around a larger heavenly body...I and the humans who inhabit me will be forever doomed to enduring the extended cold months of 'winter.' Those humans, among other things, have figured all of this out. They know all about the physical sciences that determine my fate. They know all about the natural forces alive in the world and long ago decided to impose on me something called 'the four seasons.' As you might be able to deduce, we are now in the grip of the coldest time for northerners, known as **winter**. I overhear them talking about how winter is actually quite useful. They say that the cold weather and eventual freezing of my scalp is actually good for plant and animal life. So I say...let them shiver and complain. It is good for all life to go through hardship...it will make them stronger, better, and more appreciative. Sometimes I hear them admit to that in what they think are secretive tones.

Oh, yes. I can hear them. I can hear them talking...and I can feel their presence upon my surface. I can also sense that they do not enjoy these cold months, but what do I care? I am somewhat at their mercy...as they use and sometimes abuse me grievously. There are those that I tolerate quite easily...because of their sense of respect both for me and all other natural life dwelling upon my surface. But there are many others who have no natural respect...no sense of their place upon me...no sense of natural connection. They are the ones that I would prefer to eradicate...were it in my power to do so.

Due to my advanced age, I have seen many different races of humans come and go. I have determined that no one race has more respect or connec-

tion to me than any other. It is more a matter of individuals or groups within any of their populations having the proper sense of respect towards me. My favorites have always been the nomads, the naturalists, the agriculturalists, the mariners, the botanists, the zoologists, the limnologists, the aviators, the navigators, and the outdoorsmen. They all understand me...and their place in the grand scheme of living upon my surface. They enjoy the fruits of what I can provide...when cultivated with care...and know that there are certain ways to approach me if they want to live in harmony.

These wise humans seem to be very much in the minority, though. There are too many others who have no regard for their actions and no understanding of this natural world. They consume unwisely...they

163 Yard Par 3 eighth hole at the Refuge Golf Club in Oak Grove, Minnesota.



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pursue money too mightily...they abuse themselves and nature equally...and do not deserve me. I tolerate them only until I can no longer stand it...and then remind them of the mighty forces that I still possess.

The wise humans are constantly attempting to educate the others...through their 'land grant universities,' for example. Not that I even understand that term...I certainly didn't *grant* them anything...they are simply using my land during their time here. But I suppose that in their quest for educating others...I will gladly permit them use of some of the finest agricultural lands found anywhere.

I do understand that these good 'midwestern' humans have always understood their role and are dedicating their short lives towards preserving and even enhancing the natural world inherited from earlier generations of 'Americans.' They are like countless others across this world...striving to protect me and all that I have to offer. They all speak different languages and have their different customs...but, in common, they understand me and seem to be doing their best to preserve me.

In particular, those known as agriculturalists...of whatever region of the world...seem to appreciate my bounty and understand their role in preserving the humanity that depends on them. It seems a real shame that their fellow citizens fail to understand the absolute basic necessity of food production and agriculture in general. Some of those people have really lost the connection between human, plant, and animal life.

It is not easy to produce food enough to provide for large populations of humans. It is a monumental annual task...which if discontinued or obstructed would cause problems unimaginable for those same humans who object to the methods and materials. How ironic!

I am very forgiving of those who cultivate my surfaces...enriching the soils...and enabling plant growth...and helping to beautify me. I truly understand their part in this world...and only hope that they understand it also.

In a larger and opposite sense, humans now are beginning to understand that their abuse of me could have serious long-term consequences. I can only tolerate so much of their abuse. I have really been taken for granted...and nobody likes that feeling, eh?

Fortunately, it is not too late. Human scientists around the world now know how serious the abuse has been...and have the beginnings of solutions that politicians and governments will have to endorse and support. Even the industrialists and multinational corporations will have to cooperate...as there is really no other choice.

Some humans possess much wisdom...while others

look at only short-term gain. The short-terms have had too much power for far too long...but even they cannot break me. I have too much capacity for patience. The enormity of my system...with the combination of earth and atmosphere...permits me to sustain their abuse until they all come to their senses.

My senses consist only of a faint sense of hearing and a much larger sense of feeling. I feel that there is much change forthcoming from these humans. They seem to understand the gravity of the situation...*no pun intended*.

Then, maybe the natural and human world can return to a time when my scalp really freezes...when the bitter, cold winter winds really blow...when the snows pile up all across the northern areas...and humans learn again how to cope and survive during their winter season.

Only then will they truly appreciate the season that is to follow...what they call *spring!* 🌱

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“Don’t Look Back”

By Dr. Doug Soldat, Department of Soil Science, University of Wisconsin-Madison

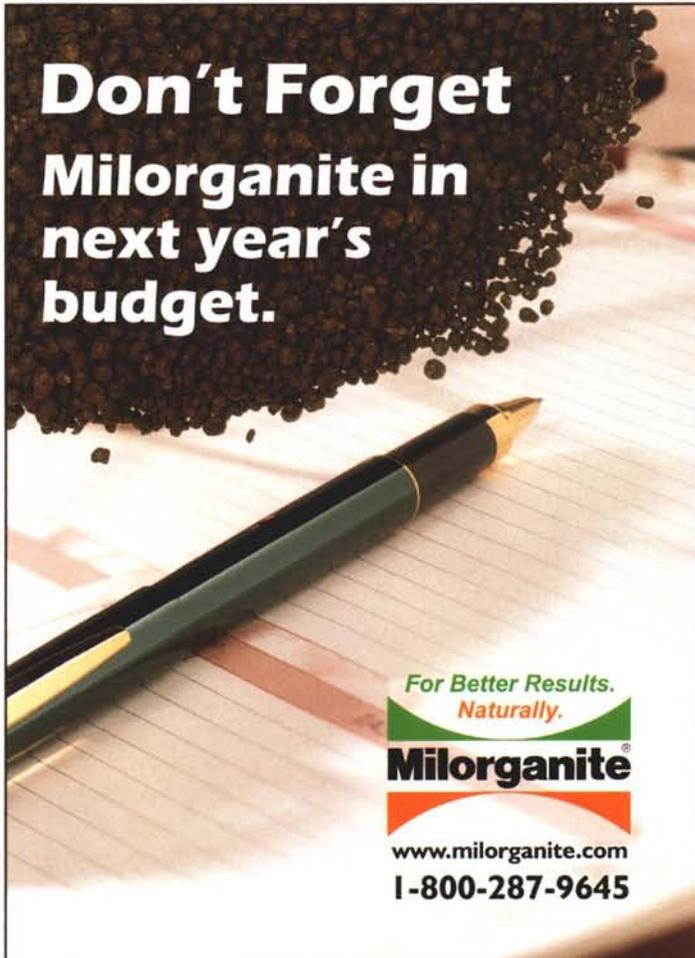
Just the other day, I pulled out a back issue of *The Grass Roots* from a manila folder that I have been carrying around with me ever since it was published in 2001. The issue held special significance for me for two reasons. First, it contains my very first research publication; and second, I kept it for a short paragraph written by the editor of *The Grass Roots* in an article discussing the recent (and hard won) stability of the turfgrass program at the UW. At that time, the last remaining question for the turf program was how Dr. Kussow’s retirement would be handled by the University. Here is the paragraph in question:

“I am not exactly sure when Wayne Kussow plans on retiring. We can hope “never” but that’s foolish. There aren’t many Phds coming out with a soil science background and a turf specialty; I can see a bad moon on the rise. I was thinking the other day as I read Doug Soldat’s article in this issue of *The Grass Roots* that somehow a deal should be struck with the “University” that would allow him (assuming he is willing) to finish his PhD and step up to Wayne’s job when Wayne does retire. That way the prof and student could plan course work and research that would match what Wayne thinks would be best for his position. Probably won’t happen, but it makes sense and ought to be discussed with someone.” (Miller, 2001)

I clearly remember stumbling upon this article back in the summer of 2001 and thinking that Monroe had finally fallen off his rocker. How could I be worthy of consideration for such a position? Well, the simple fact was that I wasn’t worthy and I knew it. I kept the issue to remind me of the all the hard work that lay ahead.

Depending on your perspective, 2001 can seem like just yesterday or a lifetime ago. For me, it tends towards the latter. More than a few things have changed in my life since that date, including moving miles away from family and friends to Upstate New York, earning a Ph.D., and starting a family. But the first of all of these changes was when I decided to work toward my Master’s degree under Dr. Kussow. I believe I learned more from Wayne in those two years than I had in all my years of formal education. Some of the things that stick with me were the subtle lessons that were periodically interjected while we were working together.

One such episode that sticks out in my mind was the time the Turf Doc and I re-grassed a very large sand research green at the O.J. Noer Facility. Wayne told me that cutting the sod would remove too much soil, requiring us to add more sand and thus potentially creating an undesirable layer in the root zone. The solution to this would be to break up the sod with a tractor-mounted rototiller and then hand rake out all the broken pieces, and by doing so very little sand would be lost from the root zone mix. Breaking up the



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sod took thirty minutes - at the most. Hand raking all the little pieces, however, took close to forty hours. That's five straight days of hand raking for eight hours a day (and I think it was 90 degrees that week). Needless to say this was a slow and arduous process. We began raking at the south end of the green and raked the sod pieces in to small piles that would be shoveled into the back of a utility vehicle. As we progressed we'd move with our backs to the north, looking only at the part of the green that had been raked. At one point I remember complaining about the seemingly endless amount of work left to do. Wayne's reply was "Doug, we're facing this way for a reason. Don't look at how much work remains; just try to focus on what we've accomplished so far."

I can look back now on all the progress that I have made to get to this point since the article Monroe wrote in 2001. It is a tremendous honor to be selected as the replacement for the person that has had such an influence on me. The raking analogy breaks down at this point for me because I am really looking forward to the years of work that lay ahead. And I think

it is an incredible opportunity to be put in the position to work for the university and turf industry in the state that will always be home for me.

As for the Turf Doc, he now stands with his rake at the end of the proverbial green. He is looking back at a tremendous body of work that has been invaluable turfgrass managers in Wisconsin and nationwide. He's retired now, and can certainly do as he pleases with his time. However, one thing I'd like to see Dr. Kussow do is write a book so all the insight that he has acquired throughout the years (which now is only found scattered throughout publications like *The Grass Roots*, Wisconsin Turf Research Reports, or still locked up in his head) can be collected in one place. I know I am not the only one who harbors this wish. Probably won't happen, but it makes sense and ought to be discussed with someone.

Miller, Monroe S. 2001. CALS, UWEX Keep UW - Madison Turf Program Moving Ahead. *The Grass Roots*. 30(4):39. ♣



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An Early Christmas

By **Monroe S. Miller**, Golf Course Superintendent, Blackhawk Country Club

It started with a call from Scott Neary in late November. He invited me to attend a Green Bay packer game on December 10th. I was gone when the call came; Chad Grimm related the message to me a short time later.

Cheryl and I had Packer season tickets for 25 years. We gave them up because more and more games had been scheduled for December. The travel could be dicey and the weather miserable and, at our age, those factors took a lot of fun out of it.

But before I could say anything, Chad said, "the game is in San Francisco."

Who could decline an invitation like that?! Aside from some major family event, a long December weekend in California doesn't come one's way very often (or ever!).

Scott had achieved a Reinders' sales goal and could invite three of his customers. He chose Mark Schwarting, Andrew Putzer and myself. We were all overwhelmed.

We left Milwaukee early on Friday and had an uneventful trip to California, arriving before noon. We stayed at the Tuscan Inn Best Western Hotel. Hundreds of other Packer fans were there also, so we felt right at home. The hotel was a couple of blocks from Fisherman's Wharf and the piers associated with it.

I had been to San Francisco a few other times, for GCSAA conferences twice and on a trip another time. Although I had made brief stops at the wharf area, this trip gave me the chance to really spend the time to leisurely look around. It comes down to this - the Fisherman's Wharf is best known for its seafood - great seafood. Yes, Ghirardelli Square is



A cyclist's view of San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge.



Alcatraz is clearly seen from Fisherman's Wharf.



San Francisco is clearly a city of significant grade changes!

there (great chocolate), the National Maritime Museum, and a number of other pedestrian sites. But the outstanding and affordable and fresh seafood tops all else. We looked all around that area that Friday afternoon.

Saturday was a free day, left open in case of travel troubles on Friday. Alcatraz Island was out as an option - transportation strike - so Scott and Mark rented bikes and rode across the Golden Gate Bridge, past Sausalito and around to the north side of San Francisco Bay. Andrew spent time with a good friend who had moved from Oshkosh to California in a career move.

I went for a daylong walk - a long day and a long walk. The hotel was only a few blocks from Columbus Avenue, which runs from Fisherman's Wharf to the heart of the financial district where the Transamerica Pyramid building is located. The street goes right past Washington Square and I took the opportunity to stop at the twin-spired Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. I sat quietly for a bit, resting and enjoying the kind of architecture only found in huge churches like this one. The park at Washington Square was packed with Santa Clauses, a sure sign that Christmas was near.

A couple of blocks from the park, on the opposite side of the street, is the City Lights Bookstore. People my age lived through the “beat generation” and know of Jack Kerouac’s books, the Grateful Dead’s music and Allen Ginsberg’s antics. Much of it centered in and around City Lights and it was “cool” to visit the place and imagine the people of that time in the 1950s and 1960s.

Columbus Avenue took me through the Italian part of town and past the Stinking Garlic Restaurant. It goes from there right through the heart of Chinatown. I visited the Old St. Mary’s Cathedral, the first Catholic Cathedral on the West Coast. Before that I had walked through the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, which was the first Catholic Church in California (1849) after the Spanish missions.

A few blocks on past the formal gated entrance to Chinatown is Market Street. I crossed it and walked two blocks to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Certainly, it is not like the MOMA in New York City, but it was a great place to spend some time. I wandered over to the Moscone Convention Center where we had our GCSAA conferences, walked past the Marriott and headed uphill to Union Square.

Of course, a Midwesterner thinks only of cold and snow at Christmas time, but the season was in full bloom at Union Square, despite the warm and almost balmy temperatures. It was fun relaxing in the park and people watching. Along the way I found several other bookstores of interest.

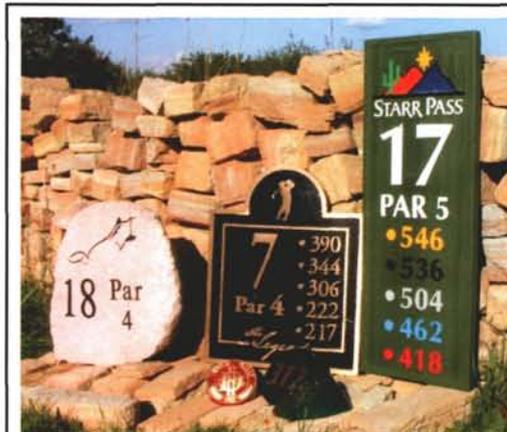
I took a bit of a different route back to the Tuscan Inn, arriving in time to greet the guys, enjoy happy hour and decide on a place to eat dinner. It was Mark who suggested John’s Grill, a well-established downtown restaurant. It was raining pretty good so we took a cab to get there – that and the fact that I had walked past it during the afternoon

and was too tired to walk it again.

John’s Grill has been in San Francisco since 1908 and is one of those places where the famous find time to visit and dine. The walls are covered – all three floors of dining – with autographed pictures of their famous patrons. John’s Grill was also a setting in author Dashiell

Hammett’s *The Maltese Falcon*. The black falcon is in a display on the second floor.

Of course, the real reason we were there was to see the Packers/49ers game. We arrived at Monster Park early because we were given passes to an alumni party. Monster Park is today’s name for



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